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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4386  
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 0003  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0814  
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 1225  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0330

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 000780

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH'S OVERNIGHT DEMOLITION OF  
A GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

1. (U) Several media outlets reported that, overnight, a wrecking crew acting on instructions from the GOR-affiliated Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) demolished a Greek-Catholic church in the Transylvanian village of Taga, near Cluj-Napoca, violating a court's injunction that banned the building's demolition. During the night of May 9, the local Orthodox priest and his supporters tore down a Greek Catholic parish church that was in the process of being restituted and was the subject of negotiations between the two denominations. Despite promising to reopen negotiations after the April 23 Orthodox Easter, Orthodox activists reportedly built a wall around the church shortly after, and overnight, destroyed the building. The following day, members of the Orthodox community began constructing a new church despite an injunction that also banned any new construction. The mayor of Taga, Romulus Marza, reportedly stated that the church belongs to the BOR as "we have more of their members in the village." He issued a demolition permit to the Orthodox Church after the incident on May 10.

2. (SBU) According to Greek Catholic Priest Calin Teglas, the Greek Catholic Church holds the property deed and is the rightful owner of the church property. The Orthodox Church disputed the deed and claimed that the Greek Catholics lost their ownership rights when the building was destroyed in 1965 and a new one was built. Teglas indicated that an officer sent from the County Court to monitor observance of the injunction this week was in fact harassed by the local community, "under the influence of the Orthodox priest." Teglas also lamented to Emboff that Taga village is not the first time the Orthodox Church used this tactic -- the church in Belotint village of Arad County is presently facing the same danger. He said that his Greek Catholic Diocese intends to file a criminal complaint against the BOR.

3. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:  
[www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest).

Taubman